

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 342 474

PS 020 326

AUTHOR May-Campbell, Christine
TITLE Improving the Homework Completion Rate of Grade Six Students in English through Alternate Assignments and Feedback.
PUB DATE 91
NOTE 106p.; Ed.D. Practicum, Nova University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Assignments; *Elementary School Students; English Instruction; *Feedback; Grade 6; *Homework; Improvement Programs; Individual Differences; Intermediate Grades; Positive Reinforcement; Self Esteem; *Student Developed Materials; Student Motivation; *Student Responsibility; *Teacher Developed Materials; Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS Flexibility (Teacher)

ABSTRACT

This practicum was designed and implemented to increase the homework completion rate of sixth graders in English classes. Objectives were formulated to reflect a statistical increase in homework completion rate by means of calculation and analysis of a computerized gradebook. A review of the literature revealed several viable strategies to increase the homework completion rate of students. Teacher-generated alternate assignments, student-generated assignments, and feedback were selected as the primary solution strategies. Throughout the implementation period, alternate homework assignments were created and used. Students were given the opportunity to design homework assignments that accommodated their individual interests and learning styles. Written feedback was provided, and evaluated assignments were distributed daily. Evaluation and analysis of the computerized gradebook proved that the practicum's statistical objectives had been met. Although the results reflected a minimal level of student achievement, unanticipated results occurred throughout the implementation period. Flexibility of homework assignments enabled the students to produce creative literary pieces and graphic representations that far surpassed expectations. The majority of the students exhibited an increase in motivation, self-esteem, and pride in accomplishment. Recommendations for furthering the primary solutions used in this practicum are provided. Appended are 15 references and related materials. (Author/GLR)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

ED342474

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.

Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official
OERI position or policy.

Improving the Homework Completion Rate
of Grade Six Students in English through Alternate
Assignments and Feedback

by

Christine May-Campbell

Cluster 38

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Christine
May-Campbell

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

A Practicum I Report presented to the
Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1991

2 BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PS 020326

PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

Verifier:

Linda Winrow
Linda Winrow

Linda Winrow

Curriculum Coordinator - English

6-12

Title

Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Address

12/30/91
Date

This practicum report was submitted by Christine May-Campbell under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

Jan. 11, 1992
Date of Final Approval of
Report

Wm. E. Anderson
William Anderson, Ph.D.,
Adviser

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iii
LIST OF TABLES	iv
 Chapter	
I INTRODUCTION	1
Description of Work Setting and Community ...	1
Writer's Work Setting and Role	4
II STUDY OF THE PROBLEM	6
Problem Description	6
Problem Documentation	10
Causative Analysis	14
Relationship of the Problem to the Literature	16
III ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS	26
Goals and Expectations	26
Behavioral Objectives	26
Measurement of Objectives	27
IV SOLUTION STRATEGY	29
Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions	29
Description and Justification for Solutions Selected	47
Report of Action Taken	49
V RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	60
Results	60
Discussion	68
Recommendations	80
Dissemination	80
REFERENCES	82

Appendices

A	EXPECTATIONS - REGULAR ENGLISH STUDENTS	84
B	EXPECTATIONS - HONORS ENGLISH STUDENTS	88
C	WEEKLY ASSIGNMENT SHEET - REGULAR ENGLISH STUDENTS	92
D	WEEKLY ASSIGNMENT SHEET - HONORS ENGLISH STUDENTS	94
E	ORIGINAL HOMEWORK POLICY	96
F	REVISED HOMEWORK POLICY	99

LIST OF TABLES

Tables

1	Regular English Students' Homework Completion Rate - November 1990	11
2	Honors English Students' Homework Completion Rate - November 1990	12
3	Regular Mathematics Students' Homework Completion Rate - June 1990	13
4	Honors Mathematics Students' Homework Completion Rate - June 1990	13
5	Regular English Students' Homework Completion Rate - June 1990	14
6	Honors English Students' Homework Completion Rate - June 1990	14
7	Regular English Students' Homework Completion Rate - October 1991	62
8	Honors English Students' Homework Completion Rate - October 1991	63
9	Regular English Students' Homework Completion Rate - November 1991	64
10	Honors English Students' Homework Completion Rate - November 1991	65

ABSTRACT

Improving the Homework Completion Rate of Grade Six Students in English through Alternate Assignments and Feedback. Davie, Florida., 1991: Practicum I Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. Descriptors: Alternate Assignments/Feedback/Flexibility in Assignments/Homework/Student-Designed Assignments

This practicum was designed and implemented to increase the homework completion rate of grade six students in English. Objectives were formulated to reflect a statistical increase in homework completion rate via calculation and analysis of a computerized gradebook.

Teacher-generated alternate assignments, student-generated assignments, and feedback served as the primary solution strategies. Initially and throughout the implementation period, this author created and designated weekly alternate homework assignments. Subsequently, the students, adhering to the instructor's guidelines, were afforded the opportunity to design homework assignments to accommodate their individual interests and learning styles. Written feedback was provided in a random manner for vocabulary assignments and in toto for writing assignments. Distribution of evaluated assignments occurred on a daily basis.

Evaluation and analysis of the computerized gradebook proved this practicum's statistical objectives successful. Even though the results reflected a minimal level of achievement, unanticipated results permeated the entirety of the implementation period. Flexibility of homework assignments enabled this author's students to produce creative literary pieces and graphic representations far surpassing the writer's expectations. An increase in motivation, self-esteem, and pride in accomplishment was exhibited by the majority of this author's grade six students. The singularity of relegating the success of this practicum to mathematical/statistical analysis proved inadequate, for the affective outcomes measured in the students' pleasure in completing homework assignments far outweighed the numerical predictions.

Permission Statement

As a student in the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies, I do (✓) do not () give permission to Nova University to distribute copies of this practicum report on request from interested individuals. It is my understanding that Nova University will not charge for this dissemination except to cover the costs of microfiche, handling, and mailing of the materials.

1/21/92

Christine May-Campbell

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community

A private school situated in an east coast equestrian community in this southeastern state may approach typicality to similar private schools in its location, pupil population, staff, and ability level of its students.

Demographically, this western flavored town, approximately 45,000 in population, covering 40 square miles, serves as a rural suburb to two major culturally oriented megalopolises. Various socioeconomic levels are represented in the town. Even though a small sophisticated business environment exists, the majority of the population employed in the town are affiliated with the agricultural business. Others seek employment in one of two major cities some ten to twenty miles away.

Description of Work Setting

The author's nonsectarian college preparatory school, referred to as the primary sight, is one of several establishments comprising the author's educational system. The author's campus houses facilities for educating students from the Early

Childhood through the doctoral level programs in several physical facilities. A secondary sight, located approximately 30 miles north, houses students in Early Childhood through grade eight classes. All institutions are affiliated with an accredited southeastern college celebrating its silver anniversary.

The author's present sight constructed in 1985 was initially established, some 19 years ago, as a laboratory school for its affiliated college. The author's institution is currently accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and holds membership in the National Association of Independent Schools, the Southern Association of Independent Schools, the state's Council of Independent Schools, and the Association of Independent Schools. Funding for the institution is secured primarily through tuition, personal donation, endowment and fund raising activities.

This private school attracts students of various calibers. No geographic limitation is imposed for enrollment, and students are transported either commercially or privately from a maximum distance of approximately 25 miles. The majority of the approximately 510 students are part of professional

families who maintain upper-middle to upper level economic lifestyles.

Humanism, the main philosophy of the school, allows the child's individual differences to be addressed. Majority of the students are Caucasian with minorities representing such countries as Cuba and Colombia. Students are grouped academically into one of three sections, basic, regular, or honors, to accommodate individual differences. Advanced Placement classes are provided for students to gain college credit. The staff adheres to the policy of humanism, and recognizes and accommodates as best as possible to address individual differences.

The administration and teaching staff is diverse in cultural background, teaching experience and instructional methodology. In the author's situation, administration consists of a headmaster, an assistant headmaster, a director of the middle/upper school, and two assistant directors. The teaching staff at the primary sight, approximately 55 strong and representing such homelands as Australia, Trinidad, Cuba, in addition to the United States, instructs grade six to twelve students. Majority of the instructional staff possesses postgraduate degrees. Some are currently pursuing master's degrees, additional master's degrees, education specialist degrees and doctoral degrees. The

administration encourages the creativity and uniqueness of its staff in disseminating information to the students.

Author's Role and Responsibility

The author, a fifteen year veteran in the public sector of the teaching profession, was entering her third year of instruction at this private institution. The author was awarded a Master of Science degree in Education from a private northeastern college in 1976. Subsequently, the author completed graduate courses in cooperative learning and computer technology. In addition, the author had attended and participated in various workshops and conferences on topics ranging from whole language to current technological advances.

The writer's grade six English classes currently enroll 100 students, ages 10-12. The academic range of the grade six population consists of students slightly below average to above average ability as evidenced in 1990 Comprehensive Testing Program scores and 1991 Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test scores. These 100 students are divided into five English classes, three of which are termed regular and two labeled honors, based on standardized test scores, previous teacher recommendations, and parental influence. No basic English class for students of low academic ability or

achievement is available at this level. However, four of these 100 students are being graded on a basic level. A modification in the quantity of homework and tests administered distinguishes them as basic.

Regular English classes, ranging from an enrollment of 19 to 24 per class, consist of low and, in some instances, high ability students. Two honors classes of approximately 17 students each possess students of average to gifted ability.

The writer, one of a five member grade six team and one of an eight member team of the grade 6-12 English department, is responsible for all aspects of spelling, grammar, and vocabulary. The author's copartner, the reading instructor at the grade six level, is responsible for teaching all novels, literature, and reading skills. The author and this copartner share similar responsibilities for process writing within the curriculum. The author functions within the parameters of the Institute's philosophy of humanism, and the English department's curricular goals.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

Student completion of homework had been a problem, and at times a nightmare, for students, parents and teachers. Some students experienced difficulty completing assignments, while others appeared to be unaffected by noncompletion. During the 1989-1990 school year, several solutions were attempted to correct the problem. However, the problem continued to exist for the current school year even though some of the same techniques, now proven to be ineffective, had been employed.

In retrospect, a number of negative techniques were imposed on the student who did not complete homework when due. Students were penalized points on midterm and final grades if homework was incomplete or not presented when due. At times, students forfeited their free-time period to complete assignments. Remaining after school to complete overdue work functioned as another method imposed by this author. "Homework Report Forms," occasionally mailed to the parent, indicating unsubmitted assignments and due dates, required the signature of the instructor, student, and parent. As a last resort, parents were

contacted by telephone if a pattern of noncompletion of assignments was evidenced. Stemming from telephone contact with the parent, and the mailing of "Homework Report Forms," students "voluntarily" submitted their assignment book for instructor and parental signature to be used as evidence that the homework assignment was recorded and completed by the student.

The author, similar to the student, encountered a magnitude of problems when students failed to complete assignments when due. The author's simplest task was to record homework completion on a daily basis. At times, this procedure became problematic. Students frequently left assignments in their locker, initiated the great bookbag hunt for homework, or insisted upon qualifying answers prior to review. Valuable instructional time was sacrificed by these daily occurrences. This problem manifested itself into a time-consuming record keeping of overdue assignments. The author identified daily those students lacking assignments, and frequently sought a time during the day or after school for the students to complete overdue work. The author completed the "Homework Report Form" with the dates and specific assignments missed, and presented it to the student for appropriate signatures, or mailed it directly to the student's

parents. In the event that the student did not return the "Homework Report Form" signed by the parent, the author contacted the parent via telephone.

The parent faced with his/her child not completing homework also struggled with this problem. Parents contacted the author in an attempt to establish a framework for dealing with this situation. Parents viewed the student's assignment book nightly to see if the assignment was copied, and to see if the author had included any relevant notes. At times, the parent actually checked the student's homework to see if it was completed according to the assignment book. Occasionally, parents, in frustration, contacted the author for solutions after all attempts to supervise and prod the student into completing homework had failed.

The problem of students failing to complete homework assignments when due posed interminable difficulties for students, instructors and parents. All three constituents continued to seek solutions which would inspire students to complete assignments on time, while relieving the parties' frustration and excessive amount of documentation currently employed.

A much different picture would emerge in the educational setting if the homework problem was solved. Creating or modifying situations wherein the student would continuously complete homework assignments loomed as a priority for this instructor. Instructors, including this author, would design and assign a selection of meaningful and creative homework assignments for student's selection. Specific instructions would be clearly explained by the instructor to the student prior to assignment initiation. The instructor would interject both close-ended and open-ended assignments to stimulate the student's synthesis skills and assess prior knowledge. Students could rely on verbal and written instructor feedback on homework regarding successes and errors. Since students thrive on praise, the instructor may capitalize on the impetus of the student who produces quality work by displaying such papers as an indication of positive expectations. The responsibility for formulating an environment to encourage student homework completion would fall primarily to the instructor, author included.

Problem Documentation

The author, affording credit to an individual who offered significant guided direction, utilized a personally developed AppleWorks spreadsheet program to calculate midterm and final grades. The computerized gradebook combined test grades weighted 70%, homework completion weighted 20%, and class participation/behavior weighted 10% to formulate a final grade for each student. Focusing on the aspect of homework documentation, students were assigned a grade of 100 if homework was completed, regardless of accuracy or quality. Students, if present in class the previous day, were assigned a grade of zero if homework was not available on the date due, regardless of excuse. Students were assigned a grade proportionate to the amount of homework completed, if submitted in partiality. During the initial week of school, each student received a blank index card intended to represent a "homework stamp card." This author subsequently explained the purpose of this card to the students. If the student fully completed his/her homework assignment by the start of class on the date it was due, he/she would receive one inked stamp on the card. When the student accumulated ten such stamps, he/she would be entitled to submit the card in lieu of

one homework assignment. When this submission occurred, the student would neither be penalized nor rewarded for this exchange; no grade would be given for the homework assignment.

In the 1990 school year, almost one third of the grade six students enrolled in regular English classes had completed less than 80% of homework assignments when due during the first eight-week semester. Additionally, during this same period, approximately one half of these students had completed less than 85% of homework when due. Table 1 represents the homework completion rate for 75 regular English students during the initial eight-week semester.

Table 1

Regular English Students' Homework Completion Rate-November 1990

<u>Period/Enrollment</u>	<u>% of homework completed</u>				
	<u>Less than 80</u>	<u>80-85</u>	<u>86-90</u>	<u>91-95</u>	<u>96-100</u>
2/18	4	3	2	2	7
3/18	6	3	2	1	6
4/18	5	1	2	3	7
6/21	8	3	2	0	8
Total	23	10	8	6	28

Focusing on the English students enrolled in the honors class, a different picture emerged. Table 2, showing homework completion rate information for honors students, presents a greater incident of completion.

Table 2

Honors English Students' Homework Completion Rate-November 1990

	<u>% of homework completed</u>				
<u>Period/Enrollment</u>	<u>Less than 80</u>	<u>80-85</u>	<u>86-90</u>	<u>91-95</u>	<u>96-100</u>
5/25	3	1	3	4	14

Documentation of the problem was evident to the author for a second year. In the 1989-1990 school year, the author instructed 73 grade six students in mathematics and 52 students in English. Evaluating the AppleWorks program documentation from the previous year revealed similar statistics.

In the 1989-1990 school year, two out of three mathematics classes were termed regular, and one was labeled honors. Table 3 and Table 4 reveal pertinent data regarding the homework completion rates for these 73 students in mathematics during the final eight-week term.

Table 3

Regular Mathematics Students' Homework Completion Rate-June 1990

	<u>% of homework completed</u>				
<u>Period/Enrollment</u>	<u>Less than 80</u>	<u>80-85</u>	<u>86-90</u>	<u>91-95</u>	<u>96-100</u>
2/25	13	4	8	0	0
3/16	8	4	4	0	0
Total	21	8	12	0	0

Table 4

Honors Mathematics Students' Homework Completion Rate-June 1990

	<u>% of homework completed</u>				
<u>Period/Enrollment</u>	<u>Less than 80</u>	<u>80-85</u>	<u>86-90</u>	<u>91-95</u>	<u>96-100</u>
1/32	2	2	0	2	26

In the 1989-1990 school year, one of two English classes was termed regular, and one was labeled honors. Table 5 displays a distribution of homework completion rates for the regular English students during the final eight-week semester. Table 6 reveals information

regarding the homework completion rates for the honors section of English during this same period of time.

Table 5

Regular English Students' Homework Completion Rate-June 1990

	<u>% of homework completed</u>				
<u>Period/Enrollment</u>	<u>Less than 80</u>	<u>80-85</u>	<u>86-90</u>	<u>91-95</u>	<u>96-100</u>
6/23	9	1	3	4	6

Table 6

Honors English Students' Homework Completion Rate-June 1990

	<u>% of homework completed</u>				
<u>Period/Enrollment</u>	<u>Less than 80</u>	<u>80-85</u>	<u>86-90</u>	<u>91-95</u>	<u>96-100</u>
5/29	6	2	0	2	19

Causative Analysis

A multitude of causes and excuses for not completing homework assignments, in this author's opinion and from experience, had been presented by both students and parents. Outside or after-school

activities such as Hebrew School, or tennis and ballet lessons, consumed a considerable amount of time for students. Both students and parents emphatically stated that they did not understand either the assignment to be completed, or the directions. The students on occasion received a plethora of homework in all subjects and consequently, unconsciously or selectively, lacked the time to complete the assignment. Possibly underlying the multitude of causes was student lack of responsibility for recording and completing his/her own assignments.

The teacher, in addition to the student and parent, functioned as a stakeholder in the lack of assignments prepared by the student. The teacher planned and scheduled one assignment for the entire class - the one assignment fits all syndrome. All homework assignments constituted written work only, and the instructor, predicting unmanageability, provided very little or no feedback to the student regarding his/her assignment. Additionally, the author's method of recording homework, a black or white situation of sorts, instilled either fear or apathy in students with regard to homework completion.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

This author discovered that a research of the literature revealed several causes for students failing to complete homework assignments. Some of the causes stemmed from the responsibility, or lack thereof, afforded the student, while others may have been attributed to the lock-step method of instruction so often utilized by instructors.

Students' after-school activities interfered with homework completion. By the same token, homework interfered with personal activities. Canter (1988) mentioned that students are faced with the problem of balancing outside activities, homework, and personal choice activities. Too often, nonacademic activities become a priority, causing homework assignments to become a secondary and often neglected choice.

In contrast, both Cooper (1989) and Turner (1987) viewed homework as an interference upon a student's fulfillment of personal goals and activities. Turner found that instructors often assign homework without regard for other assignments being given, thus creating an overwhelming amount of work to be completed in one evening. The student's personal choice activities are thus stifled due to a lack of time. In the same vein as Turner and Cooper, Epstein and Pinkow (1988)

discussed the costliness of homework, both from the teacher's and student's standpoints. They explained that the process of designing, assigning, correcting, and evaluating homework assignments is time-consuming for the instructor (Epstein & Pinkow). The instructor's personal time is sacrificed. So too, the cost to the student given mundane, inappropriate homework is measured in frustration, noncompletion of assignments, and lack of learning (Epstein & Pinkow).

As a second documented cause, teachers failed to clarify directions and be certain that students understood the assignments fully and accurately. Students, at times, incorrectly identified assignments to be completed and/or accompanying directions. Winter (1969) mentioned that the problem arises wherein the educational system, in an attempt to reduce pressure on the student, only causes an increase by assigning work the student does not understand, or by neglecting to state a purpose for the assignment. Lack of clarity and insufficient comprehension of the purpose and directions of an assignment were two causes, according to Turner (1987), of student failure or inability to complete assignments.

Students faced with an overabundance of homework on a given day, a third cause of assignment noncompletion, neglected to complete all assignments. Teachers assign homework based on their own need for curriculum coverage. Rosemond (1990) directed attention to the quantity of homework assigned, and the point of diminishing returns. He noted that a variety of excuses, avoidance behaviors, and possibly loss of interest in school and motivation for learning may result if an excessive amount of homework is continuously given (Rosemond). Adults function within an eight hour workday. Rosemond pointed out that the student, after a seven hour day in the classroom, must continue his/her workday at home with an additional two hours of homework. Epstein and Pinkow (1988) supported Rosemond in their belief that the cost to the student facing excessive amounts of homework is detrimental. They view it as a waste of time on both the part of the instructor and the student (Epstein & Pinkow).

In the educational system, consultation among instructors was often slim or nonexistent. Too often, individual instructors failed to communicate with one another regarding the quantity of homework assigned. Sonna (1990) mentioned that this lack of communication is a common complaint among middle school students. Consequently, the student may be inundated with

assignments on any given day. Specifically, Turner (1987) stated that individual assignments may be too long to be completed in a practical time frame given numerous assignments.

Serving as a fourth cause for homework noncompletion, authors stated that some students had not assumed the responsibility for their own work. Rosemond (1990) pointed out that the sense of responsibility must be instilled in a child at home and at an early age. If such responsibility is lacking, the effects of such neglect continues, and eventually extends to the classroom situation. Sonna (1990) concurred with Rosemond in a sense. Middle school students, she felt, who had not developed the responsibility to study regularly at home or cultivated good study habits, experienced a difficult time with the middle school concept of different classes and different teachers (Sonna). To quote Sonna (1990):

Indeed, students who have not learned to apply themselves, to manage time, to make a sustained effort, to tolerate failure, to create their own structure, to follow rules and limits, to function independently and responsibly may be overwhelmed by the exigencies of adult life. (p. 49)

Parents questioned the issue of responsibility, both on their part and their student's. Homer (1978) has informed parents that instructors expect that students will complete assignments without constant reminder. With this in mind, Sonna (1990) cited confusion present in parents who cannot accept the fact that a child may not be motivated enough to accept the responsibility for his/her own work. Children express, at times, negative feelings toward homework. According to Sonna, these feelings, a normal part of the maturation process, must be focused and definitely not overtake behavior. Sonna expressed concern for the conscientious parent who assists the student in completing homework. Assistance may be as simple as answering one question posed by the student, or total involvement in all phases of the child's homework. Sonna believed that this involvement by the parent stifles the creative thinking ability of the student and relieves the student of the responsibility of completing his/her own tasks. As long as the parents continue to bear the responsibility for the student's work, the student will allow this and will come to expect the same.

At times, lack of responsibility resulted in detrimental and self-destructive behaviors on the part of the student. Glasser (1990) described in depth the feelings of negativity besetting students. Students complain that work is boring because it lacks direction or purpose (Glasser). They fail to accept the responsibility of producing quality work because they lack control over their learning (Glasser). Assignments do not satisfy their needs. Thus, interjects Glasser, a minimal amount of work accomplished is subsequently replaced by anger, frustration, and discipline problems. Responsibility for the work and its quality, in the student's eyes, becomes the problem of the instructor, not the student (Glasser).

A fifth cause found within the literature was directed toward teachers who functioned within the realm of the one assignment fits all syndrome. Too often, instructors, including this author, fall into a pattern of assigning routine, mundane work. Instructors sensed that it was considerably easier to formulate a single set of plans to suit the entire student population. Winter (1969) presented the ever too realistic situation in which parents at grandiose meetings are told of the institution's intention to accommodate individual student differences. However,

when the parent sees the student's assignments, he/she notices that the same work, and quantity of the same, are given to each pupil (Winter). Sonna (1990) focused on the problem of assignments not structured to account for the student's personality type or learning style. She (Sonna) stated that the instructor's type of personality influences the assignments developed. However, Sonna iterated that students tend to approach assignments differently based upon favoritism of subject, material presented, assignments, and instructor. Sonna offered eleven patterns of student preferences which emerge and pose the problems of homework completion. In the same vein, Turner (1987) stated that one assignment may not be appropriate for all students who differ in ability and learning style, age, and maturity.

Too often, students were required to complete homework assignments which reflected low-level or rote thinking skills. Wolfe (1989) believed that our educational system is far too systematic in its assignments. Instructors are teaching for predictable and measurable outcomes at the expense of the student's independent and creative thinking skills. Lawson and Wollman (1975) pointed out that homework problems tend to be one of recognition requiring a single or multiple step solution. They continued to state that typical

homework problems do not require the student to examine his/her thinking or compare and contrast methods (Lawson & Wollman). In agreement with these authors, McNeill (cited in Glasser, 1990) iterated that instructors are presenting fragmented material which corresponds to standardized tests. McNeill (cited in Glasser, 1990) has gone on to say that teachers told to teach to the tests are stressing fact questions, correct answers only, and are increasing the amount of homework given.

Experience being the best teacher suddenly succumbed to preplanned, organized educational activities once the child has entered the academic environment. Sonna (1990), pointed out that the young child learns through experiences. As the child becomes a student in school, these experiential learning situations are replaced with assignments selected by the instructor. The notion of forcing the student to sit and become involved in such material that holds no interest for them merely lends to a dislike for, and possible noncompletion of homework assignments.

A sixth possible cause of student noncompletion of homework, instructor feedback, was addressed in two different lights. Teachers, already inundated with paperwork, failed to place little, if any, value on a student's homework assignment. From one standpoint,

Cooper (1989) found no clearly superior method of feedback to enhance homework completion. In addition, no study, he reported, compared the effects of feedback versus lack of feedback (Cooper).

In contrast, Worsham and Evertson (1980) felt, in a study they conducted, that teachers termed less effective managers neglected to check student homework or monitor submission of the same. The authors believed these monitoring procedures utilized by these less effective managers were inconsistent, making it difficult for the instructor to enforce homework completion dates (Worsham & Evertson).

Worsham and Evertson (1980) described that a lack of feedback negatively affected students. Initially, the student becomes unmotivated to complete homework or produce quality work due to the lack of interest displayed by the instructor (Worsham & Evertson). Secondly, lack of concrete feedback places the students in a limbo situation of sorts (Worsham & Evertson). Accuracy of student performance is questionable to the individual (Worsham & Evertson). Students are left with misconceptions (Worsham & Evertson). The authors continued to state that students faced with virtually no instructor feedback regarding homework assignments tend to consider work tedious and meaningless (Worsham & Evertson). Eventually, posit Worsham and Evertson,

this attitude may possibly lead to a deterioration of work habits and enthusiastic learning.

This author, after conducting a search of relevant literature, had selected six possible causes for student noncompletion of homework assignments. These causes stemmed from various instructor, student, and parental influences and behaviors that contributed to the continuing homework problem.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

Students, to the frustration of the author, their parents and themselves, continued to offer a variety of reasons for not completing homework assignments when due. The author's goal had been, via a variety of techniques, to improve the homework completion rate of grade six English class students.

Behavioral Objectives

In light of the documented evidence, the following goals and objectives were projected for this practicum.

1. During the initial 12 weeks of the 1991 school year, 75% or more of the students enrolled in the grade six regular English classes will complete 80% or more of homework assignments when due during the implementation period.
2. So too, in the initial 12 weeks of the 1991 school year, 70% or more of the students from the regular English classes will complete 85% or more of homework assignments when due during the implementation period.

3. During the initial 12 week semester of the 1991 school year, 80% or more of the grade six honors class English students will complete 85% or more of homework when due during the implementation period.
4. Accordingly, in the same time period, 75% or more of the grade six students enrolled in the honors English class will complete 90% or more of homework assignments when due.

Measurement of Objectives

Since an instrument to record, measure, and present the assessment of the aforementioned objectives was necessary, this author had chosen to represent such an assessment numerically. The author utilized a personally developed AppleWorks spreadsheet program to record homework assignments, and to calculate midterm and final grades. This computerized gradebook allowed the author to record test/quiz grades, homework assignments, and class participation points. Specifically, the homework grade was based on the following criteria: student received 100 if homework was complete, 0 if homework was not available, and a proportionate score if assignment was partially completed. All scores were based on the amount of the assignment completed and not on its accuracy. If a

student was absent for a short duration, usually he/she had two days in which to complete back assignments. Naturally, students absent for a lengthy period received special consideration regarding completion of assignments.

The gradebook's hardcopy had allowed the author to analyze problem areas for each class. So too, the gradebook's hardcopy allowed the author to possess a visual representation to present to the student and parent during conferences.

Mechanism for Recording Unexpected Events

The analysis of the spreadsheet gradebooks determined achievement of objectives. For the purpose of monitoring the success of the program, homework completion percentages for the students have been compared to the completion criteria previously established, 80% and 85% for regular class students, and 85% and 90% for honors students. In addition, a Journal has been maintained to record pertinent information regarding students' reactions to homework, opinions, and other comments they offered with respect to this practicum.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions

Student completion of homework assignments when due was an ongoing problem for the author, student, and parent. Several solutions to alleviate the problem had been offered by various authors. Solutions gleaned from research, together with this author's elaboration of each, have been combined to present viable alternatives to the homework dilemma.

Since after-school activities consumed, at times, a large portion of a student's free time, homework assignments remained incomplete or untouched. Winter (1969) suggested that instructors consider a student's after-school schedule, and assign homework accordingly. Turner (1987) suggested that teachers and students together discuss and establish a homework schedule. Formulating a schedule of assignments tailored to accommodate the student's after-school activities, as suggested by Turner and Winter, would require that each student submit a weekly schedule of after-school activities. The instructor would then be required to plan assignments to accommodate individual student's activities.

Too often students and even parents were confused with homework assignments or accompanying directions. Turner (1987), Winter (1969), and Worsham and Evertson (1980) agreed, in essence, that clarity of assignments is critical to a student's understanding and completion of the work. Worsham and Evertson stressed that requirements for form, neatness, standards for completeness, due dates, and makeup work for written assignments be clearly defined to the student. In addition, these two authors would require a student to maintain a planbook of sorts, a record of his/her grades, and a weekly activity sheet (Worsham & Evertson).

Stating the purpose of an assignment, as well as explaining or clarifying directions, was crucial to student homework completion. Additionally, assurance of clarity was insured by allowing students to pose questions and initiate homework in class. Winter (1969) believed that the purpose of an assignment should be explained to the student. The instructor, wrote Winter, after stating the assignment and its purpose, may need to verify student comprehension by having him/her begin it in class, thus checking for accuracy. Turner (1987) also advocated instructor clarification of assignments. He endorsed, as a solution to the homework problem, the allowance of

sufficient time for assignment completion, provisions for a written copy of the assignment, and permission for students to pose questions during class time (Turner). Turner suggested that the instructor disseminate homework assignments in a routine manner and at a routinely specific time during the class. Like Worsham and Evertson (1980), Turner agreed that the student should be given a framework of requirements as a guide for assignment completion. In addition, the instructor, at the beginning of the school year, should, both in writing and orally, define the requirements for homework completion. These requirements presented in a blueprint manner of sorts, may include format, quality expected, mention of due dates, maintenance of planbook, clarification of assignments by the instructor, modifications, and accommodations for the absent student.

A student may be inundated on any given day with an overwhelming amount of homework. Turner (1987) mentioned that the instructor, as part of disseminating homework assignments, needs to give the student an estimate of the time required to complete the work. Cooper (1989), Easton and Bennett (1989), and Sonna (1990) offered specific amounts of time homework should consume. Cooper suggested that Junior high students be assigned one to two hours of homework per evening,

while Easton and Bennett recommended, according to the Chicago Public School System, 45 minutes per day total. Sonna recommended 40 minutes per day for grade six students. This author recognized that Cooper, Easton and Bennett, and Sonna offered viable amounts of time for homework for grade six students. This author's institution recommended that the grade six student will average 90 minutes of homework per evening. Since multiple instructors are involved at this level, this author felt that a weekly discussion take place regarding the amount of homework to be assigned. Fair estimates of time required to complete assignments may be given, and total time required to complete all work may be calculated. This may alleviate the imbalance of too much homework one day, and no homework the next.

The underlying issue of responsibility was evident in almost every article regarding homework. Many students did not accept, or have not developed the sense of responsibility for recording and completing homework assignments. Teaching responsibility is certainly not an easy task. According to Rosemond (1990), this sense of responsibility will, if instilled at home at an early age, manifest itself in the school environment. This author has synthesized the impact of responsibility into four solution categories: creating a sense of ownership and student revelry, encouraging

character-building experiences, enhancing self-motivation and competition, and developing quality worlds.

Rosemond (1990) stressed that homework develops a sense of responsibility in a student. Homework affords the student the opportunity to assume ownership of something (Rosemond). Homework becomes a possession of the student and not the parent. This feeling of ownership by independently completing work, according to Turner (1987), results in a heightened sense of accomplishment and excitement on the part of the student. Turner encourages students to share work with peers and instructors, and to naturally enjoy the revelry that accompanies the same. He suggests that the instructor may need to teach the student how to maintain a planbook, establish a homework time schedule, read directions until the assignment is comprehended, account for materials necessary to complete assignments, and explain any special formats required (Turner). The task may be frustrating initially, but the student showered with continuous praise and positive reinforcement should begin to behave responsibly on his/her own.

Rosemond (1990) colorfully stated that homework is a "character-building experience, a stepping stone toward emancipation" (p. 21). He continued to offer seven hidden values of homework which tend to develop or enhance skills of responsibility, autonomy, perseverance, time management, initiative, self-reliance, and resourcefulness (Rosemond).

Students who are highly motivated by assignments, and who find the work challenging will, at times, according to Winter (1969), create their own assignments. Winter (1969) relates that "when this happens, they are truly learning how to learn and getting enjoyment and feelings of accomplishment from their learning" (p. 32). This acquired sense of responsibility needs to be recognized, rewarded, and enhanced, continues Winter. Turner (1987) attributed his positive results to student competition and intrinsic motivation. Turner (1987) emphasized the following:

Developing a classroom where students are more likely to do their homework involves creating dynamic tension, bringing into play in proper proportion and balance such student factors as a desire to excel (competitive urge), a wish to please and be approved by adults and peers, a desire to do things right (pride in work), satisfaction in accomplishments (intrinsic learning pleasure), and feelings of self-confidence ("can do" attitudes). (p. 35)

Glasser (1990) spoke of quality worlds for the student. In essence, the student will not assume responsibility for assignments unless the instructor is able to persuade the student, in a gentle, noncoercive manner, that completing assignments will satisfy his/her immediate and long-term needs (Glasser). The student, according to Glasser, who completes assignments does so for himself/herself. Glasser who stresses top quality work, and nothing less, encourages instructors to encourage the student to evaluate his/her own work for quality, to place a quality grade, of sorts, on assignments. This responsibility for assessment would begin with the instructor and the student comparing the degree of quality expected and subsequently produced, and eventually lead to total evaluation by the student of his/her own work (Glasser). The higher the quality of work produced, states Glasser, the more the student will control his/her own work. So too, Schlechty (1990) presents the following indicators of quality.

The student can do what he or she is expected to do; the student is motivated to do what is expected by the work assigned; the student persists with the task when he or she does not meet with immediate success; the student finds sufficient satisfaction in the work or in the consequences of doing the work that he or she is motivated to pursue similar work in the future; and the cumulative effect of student success at doing schoolwork (knowledge work) is that students learn things that are valued by the community, by parents, by teachers, and by the students themselves. (p. 60)

Instructors tended to issue the same homework assignments for all students. Assignments, quite often, were routine and predictable, reviewing low-level thinking skills. Several authors offered creative alternatives to the instructor who failed to motivate students with the one assignment fits all syndrome. Glasser (1990), Sonna (1990), Turner (1987), and Winter (1969) suggested that homework completion problems may be solved by considering individual student needs, learning styles, personality types, ability levels, support from parents, student motivation, and interests when formulating assignments. This author considered individual needs with regard to class lessons, and mainly dealt with the situation in after-school sessions.

Sonna (1990) suggested "creating educational programs which are completely individualized to account for different student interests, abilities, and learning styles, [and] providing self-paced programs that afford students as much or as little time as they need to learn material" (p. 29). Winter (1969) wrote similarly, adding that the instructor, when planning assignments, must take into account the interests and needs of the child. The instructor must be familiar with the strengths and weaknesses of the student and formulate individual assignments which will have a positive effect upon the student's attitude, and thus enhance his/her learning (Winter). Turner (1987) suggested that selecting assignments appropriate for the student's ability may eliminate homework completion problems. He looked at individualization from a sociological and psychological aspect, in a sense (Turner). Turner (1987) mentioned that the instructor needs to consider these differentiating factors among students when formulating assignments:

presence or absence of appropriate adult models; degree of motivation, support, and opportunity to succeed provided by the home; development of success as an ideal and a possibility; self-assurance and development of positive feelings about self, personal worth, etc.; ability to deal with frustration and social barriers to success; and opportunity and influence to do school-related work. (p. 35)

Glasser (1990) has taken a different approach to individualization. His comments focused on the subject of the individual's quality world. The instructor, according to Glasser, always needs to keep the needs of the student in mind. The instructor must formulate assignments that satisfy the needs of the student (Glasser). Glasser indicated that the instructor, functioning as a lead-manager, would do well to ask the student for input regarding assignments, methods of teaching, and system of rewards for quality work. Homework, in a sense, may involve activities that an instructor, according to Glasser, can plan to be accomplished only at home. Such assignments as reading or playing a game with a family member may prove, stated Glasser, to be a worthwhile learning experience.

The main concern of lead-managers is to provide a workplace in which workers can satisfy their needs, understand that all work, including schoolwork, is rarely consistently satisfying. But if the workplace is satisfying, it can usually more than make up for what is lacking in the work itself. (Glasser, 1990, p. 132)

Too often homework assignments merely required that the student employ low-level thinking skills. Routine assignments regularly presented as homework often remained undone. Glasser (1990), Lawson and Wollman (1975), Sonna (1990), Winter (1969), and Wolfe (1989) advocated the formulation of homework

assignments that require utilization of the student's previous knowledge, as well as stimulate creative thinking and decision making capabilities.

Wolfe (1989) suggested that a vague assignment, on occasion, which requires critical thinking skills and creativity on the part of the student, be presented. Winter (1969) also advocated assigning creative and challenging problems to stimulate a student's thinking. Any assignments which allow the student to discover new ideas, draw conclusions, and formulate inferences serve well as homework problems. Glasser (1990) recommended homework assignments which require decision making on the part of the student. In addition, both Glasser and Sonna (1990) advocated interjecting the idea of having fun working on assignments.

From a slightly different perspective, Lawson and Wollman (1975) introduced the notion of interjecting a mild state of disequilibrium in the student's thinking by assigning thought-provoking problems that are challenging to the student, yet solvable. The student must draw upon past and current knowledge to formulate answers, thus eliminating the disequilibrium through a process called self-regulation (Lawson & Wollman). The authors suggested open-ended assignments to encourage creative thinking (Lawson & Wollman). At all times during this process, contend Lawson and Wollman, the

instructor should maintain dialogue with the student regarding his/her progress, attempts, and solutions. The instructor, suggested Lawson and Wollman, should not permit the student to pursue, for any length of time, dead-end solutions. With this technique as a method of homework, the student will have "increased understanding of the subject matter and increased problem-solving capability" (Lawson & Wollman, 1975, p. 4).

Several authors addressed the issue of instructor feedback on student papers. Homework was often not completed by students who felt, that due to a lack of feedback, the instructor placed little value upon the student's work. Cooper (1989), Easton and Bennett (1989), Foyle and Bailey (1985), and Worsham and Evertson (1980) all advocated the regular collection of homework, written instructor comments, and prompt return of student papers. This method, they said, places a value on the student's work, and permits the instructor to diagnose any difficulty the student faces (Cooper; Easton & Bennett; Foyle & Bailey; Worsham & Evertson).

Easton and Bennett (1989) have found that student performance increases when homework contains comments and teacher grades. Foyle and Bailey (1985) advocated collecting, grading and promptly returning homework to

the student. Cooper (1989) stressed that "teachers should collect homework, check it for completeness, and give intermittent instructional feedback. This procedure demonstrates that homework is taken seriously and has a purpose. The purpose should be to diagnose individual learning problems" (p. 91).

The diagnosis of academic problems via analysis of homework was further addressed. Worsham and Evertson (1980) also shared Cooper's (1989) belief that regular assessment of homework allows the instructor to assess student accomplishments and difficulties. These authors suggested the instructor develop a routine for checking and collecting homework (Cooper; Worsham & Evertson). Grading, stated the three authors, may be done as a class, on an individual basis, or through the exchange of papers (Cooper; Worsham & Evertson). Worsham and Evertson suggested that all work is to be turned in, preferably in a designated spot. Any method for checking homework, maintained Worsham and Evertson, affords the student the opportunity to spot areas of difficulty and provide them with the correct answers. Winter (1969), too, suggested that instructors, after checking assignments carefully, provide subsequent reinforcement to students requiring extra help.

Another aspect of diagnosing and remedying homework problems focused on feedback occurring during the course of the class. Turner (1987), and Worsham and Evertson (1980) mentioned that instructor feedback may occur during classtime as a student begins homework. Immediate feedback, praise or suggestions may be given in such a situation. Turner, Worsham and Evertson mentioned that instructors should check for accuracy, respond to questions posed, and give direction and praise to students as they work. Glasser (1990) suggested that compulsory homework be drastically reduced, and an emphasis placed on the importance of classwork. Glasser (1990) stressed that students "would be given the time to complete their work in class under the direct supervision and support of their teachers and with the help of each other" (p. 116). Homework, contended Glasser, would involve improving the quality of the task completed in class. So too, Sonna (1990) advocated the use of in-class time to begin homework as a way to provide guidance to students experiencing difficulty with the assignment.

Instructor feedback may be rendered orally or written, individually or collectively, visually or audibly. Encouraging student motivation by designing a homework bulletin board to collectively display good papers was the suggestion of Canter (1988).

"Consistent praise and positive notes on returned homework are very effective motivators" (Canter, 1988, p. 30). In turn, Glasser (1990) suggested that top quality papers be displayed as an example of expectations. This writer would suggest that the student who feels his/her homework is of top quality be permitted to display that work on a homework bulletin board.

All the solutions suggested by the authors researched were viable. However, in light of this author's anticipated situation, five grade six English classes with a total enrollment to exceed 100 students, some solutions seemed more practical than others.

The ideal homework schedule would revolve around the student's after-school activities. Each student would be given assignments on evenings that did not conflict with prearranged activities. This solution may certainly solve the homework problem, but formulating 100 separate schedules proved a monumental task.

Dissemination of assignments in a routine manner, with specific requirements for such factors as neatness, due dates, and standards for completion may improve the homework completion rate of those students constantly confused by assignments. The instructor may need to take time to explain these issues and the

utilization of a daily planbook to individual students. Accordingly, the proposed solution of having students begin homework in class as a means of instructor verification of student comprehension seemed practical. Each of these proposed solutions would work within the author's environment. This author would suggest, though, that a homework blueprint of requirements be presented and explained to students in September.

This author's proposed solution to the problem of too much homework on a given day was a weekly meeting among the five grade six instructors to compare the planned homework assignments and time required for completion for each subject for the week. However, too many variables changed homework assignments on any given day, and predictability or assurance of proposed homework was questionable.

Instilling a sense of responsibility in a student may be the most important solution to the homework problem. The methods suggested from the literature were feasible, and capable of being implemented within this author's academic situation. Responsibility, according to Rosemond (1990), should begin at home at an early age. However, too often, the student enters school with the notion that responsibility for work must be assumed by the parent and teacher (Glasser). Therefore, this author felt that, although it is not an

easy task, teaching a student to become responsible was accomplishable. Methods to institute a program of building responsibility included noncoercive, pleasant gimmicks, of sorts. A student thrives on genuine praise. Encouraging the student to complete work independently, and subsequently praising the student for the tiniest accomplishment may well function as one component of the responsibility building task. The instructor may easily formulate a plan to describe and stress top quality work. Display of such work would encourage others to assume the responsibility for evaluating and improving their own assignments for best quality. By constantly stressing and praising quality work and self-motivation, more students may begin to follow suit toward homework completion.

One solution to the homework problem has included offering the student the selection of alternate homework assignments. Designing homework assignments to accommodate the interests, abilities, levels of motivation, amount of family support, and accessibility to materials was certainly one method which may increase student interest in completing homework. Again, it may be difficult to assess 100 different levels of the above, but this author may offer a variety of assignments from which to choose. Glasser (1990) noted that student interest should be piqued if

the instructor requests student input regarding assignments. More in-depth planning would be required, but the result may be favorable.

Mundane, routine homework assignments often remained untouched by the student. Designing thought provoking, higher order thinking problems may serve as a solution. An instructor may establish a state of disequilibrium for the student who then attempts to regain self-regulation by employing knowledge from several sources to solve problems. Specifically, this author may design writing, vocabulary, or grammar assignments to challenge the students.

If the student felt or sensed that the instructor placed little or no value on homework assignments, the problem of noncompletion will exist. The solution to alleviate such a feeling includes instructor feedback, written or verbal, on the student's assignment, praise, and attention. Several authors suggested regular collecting, evaluating, commenting upon, and returning of student assignments. Not only does this method allow the instructor to diagnose student learning problems, but also lends credibility to the worthiness of completing the work. Canter (1988) appealed to the student's desire for praise and need for feedback by suggesting a homework bulletin board to display quality papers. Feedback may also take the shape of verbal

assistance and praise as a student begins homework in class. Glasser (1990) offered the solution of keeping compulsory homework to a minimum. Rather, the instructor would emphasize classwork by working with the students during class time to insure student comprehension, leaving homework as the time for revision and improvement of the quality of these in-class assignments.

Description and Justification for Solutions Selected

The various solutions to the seven noted problems contributing to the lack of student completion of homework all seemed practical and achievable. Considering this author's situation, five grade six English classes, a combination of possible solution strategies would be attempted. The author would blend a mixture of responsibility building techniques, student selection and suggestion of assignments, individual quality work needs, and positive feedback to increase the rate of homework completion.

The issues of assignment clarification, student responsibility, and quality work would be introduced initially. This author would routinely explain assignments thoroughly, provide students with a weekly assignment sheet which includes class and homework assignments to achieve specific goals and objectives.

and work individually with students unable to maintain a daily planbook. The author would introduce, and continue to stress the notion of responsibility. This author intended to apply some of Glasser's (1990) techniques to accomplish the objectives established. The issue of quality work, as stressed by Glasser, would be introduced. The degrees of quality would be discussed with the student, and comparisons and acceptable levels of quality would be demonstrated. The author intends to establish Canter's (1988) idea of a homework bulletin board to display top quality work.

This author recognized that the notion of compulsory, daily homework assignments merely contributed to the overall completion problem. Glasser (1990) suggested reducing the number of mandatory homework assignments, and placing an emphasis on classwork. Weekly goals and objectives, formulated, introduced, and clarified by the instructor, will be addressed via classwork and homework. The author will design alternate homework assignments to fulfill these objectives. Student input regarding assignments will be encouraged, considered, and utilized. Subsequently, the author will offer the students a choice of creative assignments based upon their suggestions.

This author needed to place more of a value on the student's assignments. Collecting student homework, commenting upon the same, and returning it in a timely fashion will be attempted. At this point, it seems unfathomable to do this on a daily basis considering the sheer number of students. The method of assigning homework either two or three times a week, coupled with appropriate feedback may emphasize the meaningfulness of the student's work.

The selected solutions seemed practical and accomplishable within this author's academic setting. The student population was deemed capable of comprehending and implementing these solutions. Additionally, the author, supported by the administration, possessed the opportunity of pursuing such alternate teaching strategies.

Report of Action Taken

The review of the literature provided a foray of possible solution strategies to remedy the homework completion problem. This author had selected three primary methods of implementation to include instructor-generated alternate homework assignments, student-generated homework suggestions, and feedback. The solutions selected had served as the most viable alternatives considering the author's academic

situation. Prior to the explanation of specific implementation procedures, this author believes that some noteworthy initial and intermediary contributory behaviors paved the way for subsequent actions.

Precursory Actions to Implementation

Since these grade six students were thrust into an entirely new physical and academically structured environment, this author found it was imperative to introduce a foundation of instructor expectations (see Appendixes A and B). A discussion regarding the issues of classroom regulations, acceptable behavior, quality work, responsibility, and planbook utilization occurred with all students during the first few days of the new school year. As evinced in prior years, students' adaptation and acclamation to these novel surroundings required patience and constant intervention on the part of the author. One such intervention occurred via the introduction of the weekly assignment sheet (see Appendixes C and D). The author had designed a weekly document containing tests to be administered and the homework due during that time period. Once the students accepted and abided by these fundamental policies, and an adequate period of adjustment had elapsed, the author began to implement solution

strategies aimed specifically toward increasing the homework completion rate of these students through alternate assignments and feedback.

Initial and Intermediate Homework Policies

Operating within the scope and belief of previous years, this author discussed and disseminated a blanket homework policy to all students in September (see Appendix E). The student immersed in a totally new environment never questioned the initial homework policy. This author operated within the realm of this policy for approximately two weeks.

It had been the intention of the author to design and assign homework three times a week. Each Monday witnessed the author reviewing with the students the assignments for the week and the following Monday. This author had established three specific dates for homework to be due. On Tuesday, a specific assignment was due. Vocabulary assignments were required to be submitted no later than Friday, and a writing assignment was to be completed no later than the following Monday. When a student brought to light the fact that he had been unable to receive even partial credit for a late homework assignment, this author contemplated and subsequently revised her homework grading policy (see Appendix F) to reflect a good faith

effort on the part of the student to complete postdue homework assignments. All agreed that the new policy reflected a much more humanistic approach to the homework completion problem by affording the student the opportunity to receive at least partial credit for his/her work. Operating under the premise of this new policy, the author initiated the notion of alternate assignments, student-designed homework assignments, and feedback.

Implementation of Alternate Assignments

This author, an educator for approximately the past 20 years, had been accustomed to creating and assigning identical homework for the entire student population. With each passing year, time was spent by the author selecting and assigning homework exercises found within the pages of the student's textbooks. It became routine to merely follow the progression of individual units and assign homework in the form of supplemental worksheets or uncompleted classwork. Operating under this premise during the initial week of school, the students were given no choice of homework assignments. This author assigned to all regular and honors English students homework directly from the textbooks with no opportunity for choice. The one

assignment fits all syndrome prevailed in this author's academic situation for approximately one week.

Bearing in mind that one of the proposed solutions was to create alternate homework assignments, this author had subsequently focused on a thematic approach based on the weekly vocabulary units since they lent themselves to a natural array of possible creative outcomes. With the revised homework policy fully in place, this author created and presented an alternate homework assignment to all students beginning with the second week of implementation. The author had offered students a choice of approximately two different homework assignments per academic area, namely vocabulary and writing. Assignments were designed to reflect open- and close-ended writing choices, to appeal to a preference for a visual or auditory presentation, and to afford the student the opportunity to exhibit his/her artistic or oratorical capabilities. Included among the alternate vocabulary assignments, the regular English students were given the opportunity to prepare a Spanish dish for class taste testing and submit the recipe to this author. Additionally, reflective thinking was required in an alternate writing assignment which questioned the necessity of capitalization and punctuation. The honors English students had been afforded similar instances to exhibit

their creativity by designing posters or models based upon a vocabulary lesson's theme of plants and animals. Reflecting upon the tumultuous situation at the time in the Soviet Union, these honors students were asked, in an alternate writing assignment, to discuss the practicality of cartographers to continue to produce maps or to wait until the situation quelled before proceeding with business.

Student-Generated Assignments

With the solution strategy of designing and offering alternate homework assignments fully under way, the author, beginning approximately the fourth week of school, allowed students to suggest assignments based upon the thematic vocabulary units. The author's original intent had been to secure alternate assignment suggestions from the students, discuss each for practicality, and include one or two as an additional choice. When this had been attempted with both the honors and regular English classes, the students did offer a number of alternate assignments which were immediately discussed for feasibility. The only criteria this author imposed had been that their suggestions must at least equal in difficulty those developed by the author. The issue of choosing one or two student-suggested assignments posed a problem.

Several students had suggested viable alternatives, and the result of selecting one or two to impose on the remainder of the students seemed contrary to the intent of encouraging self-designing work. Instead, the author had stated that any student who chose to design his/her own assignment was required to obtain permission from the author prior to initiation. This author maintained for the duration of the implementation period the pattern of proposing weekly alternative assignments for both vocabulary and writing, in addition to allowing the student to create a personally-designed assignment in each of these two areas of study.

However, since approximately the sixth week of implementation, it became necessary for the author to impose further restrictions upon the self-designed assignments. It became evident that some of the students merely opted to create simple word search puzzles or matching exercises to fulfill the vocabulary requirement. Consequently, this author had to state specifically on the weekly assignment sheet examples of exclusionary assignments. Additionally, the students required a subtle reminder of the minimum level of acceptability for writing assignments before a rewrite became the issue. It became apparent during the final weeks of the implementation period that both the author

and the students required a regeneration, of sorts, in creating assignments theretofore unutilized.

Collection, Feedback, and Distribution

The original intent indicated in the proposal was to collect homework once or twice a week, provide feedback, and return it in a timely fashion. As previously stated, homework was assigned on three specific occasions during a given week. Since the inception of this implementation, the spelling assignment due on Tuesday has not been collected, nor has written feedback been provided for the same. However, work due on Friday and Monday was collected, and feedback, even if merely a statement of "Wow," was written on each paper or poster.

The problem emerged as to the amount of time consumed by reviewing all 100 students' assignments, providing feedback, and returning the work in a relatively timely manner. An attempt had been made each evening to review the students' work. At midpoint in the implementation phase of the practicum, this writer was in a "maintenance situation," of sorts, with regard to providing written feedback on all collected papers. The distribution, however, of the same was far behind. An alternate plan for distribution was necessary. The author then weighed the options of

either distributing papers daily, or setting aside a block of time one day per week for the distribution and the sharing of homework assignments. The latter plan would have enabled students to comment upon their work and to share their literary and/or graphic material with individuals or groups of students. The writer must qualify, at this point, that many students had been given the opportunity to share their posters and assorted creations with the class prior to submission. The problem was specifically embedded in returning the assignments received weekly. The author consequently selected to return homework assignments toward the end of each class period when the students were engaged in individualized work. This enabled the student to approach the author with possible questions and comments regarding the distributed material.

As the implementation period progressed, this author became inundated with a plethora of paperwork to correct, namely 200 tests per week and a similar amount of homework for each student. Acting upon the best advice of this author's advisor, Dr. William Anderson, the author collected all vocabulary homework due Friday and writing assignments due Monday, but commented upon a random sampling of papers for each class. After distributing these papers, some students questioned the author's apparent failure to review and comment upon

their assignments. The author summarily continued, for the duration of the implementation period, to peruse vocabulary assignments in a random manner. However, the author reviewed and commented upon all submitted writing assignments.

Positive Reinforcement

As an incentive to the students, this author intended to provide two primary forms of positive reinforcement, the inked stamp on their "homework stamp card," and a display of quality homework assignments on a class bulletin board. As previously explained, the student received an inked stamp on his/her "stamp card" if his/her homework was fully completed at the start of class on the date it was due. Students were subsequently permitted to submit a stamp card containing ten stamps in lieu of one homework assignment.

As an additional incentive, this author fashioned an "After-Hours Club" bulletin board on which to affix quality homework assignments. The author designated approximately a ten foot by four foot section of wall space for this bulletin board. After receiving the second week's assignments, the author realized that this allotted space could not possibly contain the amount of creative work submitted by the students.

Assignments were mounted on poster board, within shoe boxes, and in containers of various shapes and sizes. At that time, and to the present, every available wall space contains the students' work. Additionally, this author displayed several of these assignments on three hallway walls.

CHAPTER V
RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

Students' completion of homework has remained a problem in this author's present work setting for two consecutive years. After an extensive review of the literature, this author determined that provisions for instructor-created alternate assignments, student-generated suggestions, and feedback proved the most viable solution strategies for resolution of this problem. The results of this implementation may be considered from both a predetermined mathematical aspect based upon the aforementioned objectives, and from an affective or observational point of view.

Results - Mathematically Speaking

The author formulated objectives for this practicum based upon the results obtained from a previously utilized computerized gradebook program to determine the homework completion percentage of grade six students in mathematics and English. In light of this documented evidence, the author hoped to achieve the following objectives.

1. During the initial 12 weeks of the 1991 school year, 75% or more of the students enrolled in the grade six regular English classes will complete 80% or more of homework assignments when due during the implementation period.
2. So too, in the initial 12 weeks of the 1991 school year, 70% or more of the students from the regular English classes will complete 85% or more of homework assignments when due during the implementation period.
3. During the initial 12 week semester of the 1991 school year, 80% or more of the grade six honors class English students will complete 85% or more of homework when due during the implementation period.
4. Accordingly, in the same time period, 75% or more of the grade six students enrolled in the honors English classes will complete 90% or more of homework assignments when due.

Midsemester reports, written evaluations of each student's progress for the first four weeks of the initial academic term, coincided with the fifth week of this author's practicum implementation. The author calculated and compiled the homework completion rate of

all 100 grade six students to be utilized for both the midterm report, and as documented evidence of the success or failure of the solution strategies midway through the period of implementation. The following tables represent those results.

Table 7

Regular English Students' Homework Completion Rate-October 1991

	<u>% of homework completed</u>				
<u>Period/Enrollment</u>	<u>Less than 80</u>	<u>80-85</u>	<u>86-90</u>	<u>91-95</u>	<u>96-100</u>
1/26	5	3	2	1	15
2/22	8	1	2	2	9
<u>3/25</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>14</u>
Total	18	5	6	6	38

Table 8

Honors English Students' Homework Completion Rate-October 1991

Period/Enrollment	<u>% of homework completed</u>				
	Less than 80	80-85	86-90	91-95	96-100
5/16	0	0	2	2	12
6/11	0	0	1	1	9
Total	0	0	3	3	21

It was evident that 55 regular English students, or 76%, completed 80% or more of the homework assignments based upon the guidelines of the new homework policy. So too, 52 regular English students, or 72%, completed 85% or more of the homework assignments when due within the guidelines of the new policy. With regard to the honors classes, 100% of the students completed 85% or more of the homework when due, and 93%, or 25 of these students, completed 90% or more of the homework when due.

The final report of these 100 grade six students' homework completion rates calculated upon termination of the implementation period, once again coincided with the midterm evaluations for the second academic term. Tables 9 and 10 present the concluding documentation

for all 100 grade six English students' homework completion rates. It must be noted that within the period of time between evaluative calculations, eight students had been transferred from a regular to an honors English class.

Table 9

Regular English Students' Homework Completion Rate-November 1991

	<u>% of homework completed</u>				
<u>Period/Enrollment</u>	<u>Less than 80</u>	<u>80-85</u>	<u>86-90</u>	<u>91-95</u>	<u>96-100</u>
1/24	6	1	5	3	9
2/19	7	0	2	1	9
<u>3/22</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>14</u>
Total	16	2	8	7	32

Table 10

Honors English Students' Homework Completion Rate-November 1991

	<u>% of homework completed</u>				
<u>Period/Enrollment</u>	<u>Less than 80</u>	<u>80-85</u>	<u>86-90</u>	<u>91-95</u>	<u>96-100</u>
5/18	1	1	4	0	12
6/17	1	0	1	0	15
Total	2	1	5	0	27

It may be discerned from the above documentation that 49 regular English students, or 76%, completed 80% or more of the homework assignments when due during the initial weeks of the second academic semester. So too, 47 regular English students, or 73%, completed 85% or more of the homework assignments when required. With regard to the honors classes, 92%, or 32 students, completed 85% or more of the homework when due during this second semester, and 78%, or 27 of these students, completed 90% or more of the homework when due.

Affective Results

It had been the intent of this author to maintain a Journal for the purpose of recording pertinent observations, opinions, and unsolicited comments from students, their parents, and fellow workers regarding the implementation of the selected solutions. The results gained from such nonstatistical analysis afforded the author an additional method of practicum evaluation. Both positive and negative verbalizations had been noted.

Students on a number of occasions had indicated their pleasure in designing and accomplishing their own assignments. They had expressed positive comments regarding the notion of alternate and self-designed assignments. They had mentioned that the assignments allowed them to express their creativity in ways other than taking pen to paper. During the period of implementation, the writer heard very few students' complaints regarding the content or frequency of the homework.

The greatest interest had been expressed by the students' parents. Posters and other creations lined the walls and shelves of this author's room when the parents attended "Open House." The writer explained to the parents the purpose of her practicum and policies,

and encouraged them to view the results of their child's efforts. In one instance, one student's parent questioned the practicality of such assignments. She felt as if lessons and practice in basic grammar and writing skills were being sacrificed at the expense of creativity. She was reassured that concepts of grammar were taught during class and process writing was addressed and individualized in a similar manner.

One of this author's grade six team members had expressed an interest in this practicum. She had noticed the posters and other creations in this author's classroom and questioned the writer as to the method used to obtain such results. This co-worker was more interested in the results evidenced in the students' work than in the process this author utilized to obtain these results.

During approximately the fourth week of implementation, both this writer's director and middle school coordinator had expressed interest in the progress acquired to that point. The writer's director offered her best wishes and compliments, while the author's middle school coordinator acknowledged the posters decorating the halls the evening of "Open House." She had stated that the students' work reflected a great deal of creativity and effort.

In sum, the author intended to record the results of this practicum from both a mathematical and a nonstatistical point of view. The computerized spreadsheet gradebook afforded the writer the vehicle for listing, calculating, displaying, and analyzing the homework completion rate of the grade six students in English. The journal served as a source of solicited and unsolicited comments and opinions expressed by students, parents, administration, and co-workers regarding the implementation strategies.

Discussion - Mathematical Analysis

An extensive review of the literature revealed a number of viable solution strategies to increase the homework completion rate of students. This author opted to utilize three such strategies in an attempt to resolve this problematic situation. Initially, the author evidenced the rather low homework completion rate of her grade six students in mathematics and English via a computerized gradebook program. The writer subsequently formulated four objectives to establish a reasonable percentage of students capable of completing a predetermined quantity of homework in a given period of time. The proposed solution strategies had functioned as the vehicle for increasing the homework completion rate. At the midpoint period of

Implementation, the quantitative results corresponding to the objectives as stated in the proposal had been met. The homework completion rates as documented in Tables 7-10 by no means reflected an overwhelmingly successful increase in rate. In fact, attainment of the four objectives during the midpoint and final periods of implementation attested to a minimal level of achievement.

Analysis of the concluding data indicates that the objectives as stated in the proposal have been attained. A minimum of 75% of the grade six regular class English students have completed 80% or more of the homework when due, and 70% or more of the students have completed at least 85% of the homework. Additionally, a minimum of 80% of the students enrolled in the honors English classes have completed 85% or more of the homework when due, and at least 75% of the students completed 90% or more of the assignments. The revision of the homework policy to include partial credit may have accounted for the increase in rate, which by its omission may otherwise have been much lower.

Further analysis of the computerized spreadsheet had revealed that the majority of the students who completed less than 80% of the homework when due during the midpoint period of evaluation, attained this same

rate of completion in the final analysis. The author has realized that some students remained chronic noncompleters, even though verbal and written contacts with their parents had been established throughout.

The author originally intended to measure the achievement of this practicum's objectives solely from the analysis of the computerized gradebook. Operating for years under the premise of maintaining measurable data, this author sought to attain and realize appreciable evidence in the homework completion rate of the grade six students via employment of the three primary solution strategies. The results of the midpoint homework completion rate proved somewhat disappointing to this author. Even though the objectives were minimally achieved, this author had hoped for a greater increase in the homework completion rate. However, this author became aware of the singularity of measuring achievement of objectives via mathematical means in light of the unanticipated affective results which emerged throughout the implementation period.

Discussion - Flexibility of Assignments

The author maintained a Journal throughout the implementation period to document students' and parents' comments, key dates for introduction of alternate and student-designed assignments, problematic situations, and instances of teacher feedback. As the author reviewed the Journal in preparation for the midpoint progress report, an unanticipated outcome permeated the entirety of the implementation. With the introduction of alternate assignments and student-designed homework, the author witnessed innumerable instances of unexpected student creativity. Many students, now given the flexibility of learning via their preferred learning style, fashioned elaborate posters, collages, dioramas, and models to fulfill the vocabulary and writing assignments. The author continually expressed pride in the students' accomplishments. As the implementation progressed, the students had sought the opinion of this writer to admire his/her work. The situation developed into a "drop everything and see what I did" routine.

The research of Glasser (1990), Sonna (1990), Turner (1987), and Winter (1969), who iterated that homework completion problems may be alleviated by considering individual student needs, learning styles, personality types, interests, and levels of ability when fashioning assignments, proved true in this author's academic situation. The students, challenged by the notion of creating their own assignments, displayed unanticipated self-motivation (Winter). Creativity expressed in written form emerged from the author's introduction of Wolfe's (1989) concept of the vague assignment to stimulate more in-depth thought processes. Rosemond's (1990) concept of the sense of responsibility was evident in the assumption of proud ownership of assignments. Realistically, this author, when formulating the practicum's objectives, dismissed too readily the extended, in a sense, outcomes of the solution strategies.

It had been interesting to note that throughout the duration of the implementation period, the majority of the students in the regular English classes had chosen one of the teacher-generated assignments. Very few had opted to create his/her own. In contrast, the majority of the students in the honors English classes had selected to design an alternate assignment based upon his/her particular interest operating within the

framework of a given theme. It may be presumptive on the author's part to speculate a reason for such behavior. However, the author noted that the regular English students seemed more comfortable with the stability of a teacher-generated assignment. They were hesitant to suggest alternatives. The honors English students readily dismissed the teacher-designed assignment and formulated alternatives instantly based upon their interests and prior knowledge. Even though this author encouraged the regular English students to create their own assignments, the majority of these students continued to select the teacher-suggested work.

With the inception of alternate and student-designed assignments, the author had noted that the students eagerly accepted the weekly assignment sheet distributed each Monday. After instructor review of the sheet, most students immediately selected their choice of work for the week, often discussing their intentions with peers or this author. So too, a small number of students in both the regular and honors classes completed the week's assignments by the following day.

Discussion - Feedback and Distribution

With the introduction of alternate and self-designed homework assignments, this author sought to provide written feedback on every student's vocabulary and writing submissions. The author instantly discovered that this task proved to be monumental, both from the evaluative and distributive points of view. Once the author's advisor, Dr. William Anderson, suggested a random sampling of assignments for evaluative purposes, that aspect of the feedback strategy seemed much more viable. This author maintained perusal and correction of each student's writing assignment, but relegated the vocabulary assignments to quick, random viewing. It was interesting to note that the students not receiving comments affixed to their work questioned this author's lack of responsibility, in a sense, in failing to recognize his/her accomplishments. Distribution of assignments remained a source of consternation. Presented with two possible alternatives, the author opted to return assignments daily toward the end of class, thus permitting students the opportunity to share work with peers and raise questions regarding the material.

Feedback, an area espoused by Cooper (1989), Easton and Bennett (1989), Foyle and Bailey (1985), and Worsham and Evertson (1980), insures the student that his/her work bears merit and enables the instructor to diagnose areas of difficulty. This author followed Cooper's (1989) suggestion of providing "intermittent instructional feedback" on all vocabulary assignments (p. 91). The intent of placing a value upon the student's work by providing written feedback remains constant with Cooper's belief that by so doing, the student tends to accept the responsibility for completing his/her work and truly believes there exists an underlying intent to his/her accomplishments. Once this author routinely collected, evaluated, commented upon, and distributed assignments, the students then eagerly awaited the comments and drawings they had come to expect. This author, in the past, concentrated on providing feedback solely on tests, and cursorily checked the presence of homework with little regard for acknowledgment of purpose and effort. The instance of collecting, providing written comments, and returning homework, while a time-consuming task, certainly addresses the individual student's academic and affective needs.

Discussion - Reinforcements

In addition to the positive written comments affixed to homework assignments, this author as heretofore mentioned, provided each student with one inked stamp on his/her "stamp card" when the assignment was fully completed at the beginning of class on the due date. The students, inspired by acquiring the necessary ten stamps for redemption, reminded this author daily of her obligation to update their cards. This author, faced with the problem of keeping current with these stamps, provided students with stamps approximately once a week. The excitement of receiving multiple stamps served to reinforce a greater instance of homework completion.

In order to display quality homework, this author, as previously stated, fashioned an "After-Hours Club" bulletin board. It immediately became apparent that the space allotted for the display of the students' work was far from adequate. The creative, quality results produced by the students far surpassed the expectations of this author. Each piece of work exhibited meritorious recognition in one sense or another. The students' posters, drawings, and literary pieces soon occupied every available wall space in the author's classroom. Soon, three hallway walls were

decorated with the results of the students' efforts. On one occasion, this author failed to display a piece of work, as it had been considered of fair quality. The author was asked by an almost tearful student to display her poster since this represented the first assignment she completed when due. The author duly affixed the creation to an available space. Positive reinforcements in the form of written or oral comments, smiling faces, stickers, inked stamps, or display of work serves, as Canter (1988) and Glasser (1990) iterated, to increase the student's motivation to complete assignments while enabling peers to view and compare his/her work with that of others. Reinforcement definitely worked in conjunction with alternate and student-designed assignments, not to increase significantly the homework completion rate, but to encourage the student to produce his/her best quality work via a preferred learning style.

Discussion - Summary

Students' completion of homework remained a problematic situation for this author. After extensive research, three primary solution strategies to include alternate assignments, student-designed assignments, and feedback were selected to improve the homework completion rate of grade six English students. This

author, assigning homework three times per week, initially designed alternate assignments to reflect the student's creative ability, intellectual capability, and preferred learning style. The interjection of student-generated homework assignments encouraged additional exhibition of individuality. Feedback in the form of written comments or sketched smiling faces was initially affixed to every vocabulary and writing assignment.

While this author designed objectives to reflect a mathematical increase in the homework completion rate, unanticipated results seemed to far outweigh statistical expectations. In the final analysis, the author minimally achieved the mathematical objectives. However, affective results attested to an increase in student motivation and creativity in completing homework assignments.

This practicum did not progress without its problematic areas of concern. Chronic homework noncompleters maintained their low-level of completion despite this author's efforts to contact the parents regarding the situation. Moreover, the author, faced with insufficient time to evaluate, to comment upon, and to distribute all assignments, found it imperative to remedy the situation. The author administered random feedback on all vocabulary assignments, while

continuing to assess each writing assignment. Distribution of the same occurred on a daily basis. While it remained the author's intent to encourage quality work among her students by displaying the same on a predesigned bulletin board, the author soon discovered that the space initially designated as the bulletin board rapidly became occupied with posters and writings. Additional wall space, both inside and outside of the classroom, served as a bulletin board.

This author approached this practicum initially with the intent of increasing mathematically the homework completion rate of the majority of grade six students in English. Once the solution strategies were initiated, the author discerned that the flexibility of assignments encouraged the students to produce creative and innovative projects far beyond the expectations of this author. It must be admitted that mere statistical analysis cannot dominate as a sole assessment tool. The scope of success must be measured in terms of increased motivation and enthusiasm on the part of the student who willingly completes homework assignments.

Recommendations

As a result of this practicum, this author postulates a triple, viable set of recommendations for furthering the primary solution strategies utilized in this practicum.

1. Periodic reorganization and/or reformulation of alternate assignments designed by the instructor is imperative to avoid repetitiveness.
2. Students may require guidance and encouragement in self-designing homework assignments.
3. When dealing with a vast number of students and multiple assignments, provisions for written feedback on students' work may require a random sampling of the same to insure timely assessment and return.

Dissemination

Throughout the practicum implementation phase, dissemination of the solution strategies was limited to verbal discussions with a limited number of co-workers. This author's grade six team members, her practicum verifier, and all administrators have inquired as to the practicum's progression and results. In an informal meeting with the director of the upper/middle

school, the author shared her students' enthusiasm in designing projects and posters to fulfill alternate homework assignments. It was at that time that the director requested the author to present her practicum initially to all grade six team members, followed by a presentation to all middle school teachers. The director is currently arranging the opportune time for such dissemination. Since the issue of homework noncompletion plagues instructors in almost every academic situation, this author hopes to write and submit an article regarding the solution strategies utilized to achieve both the statistical objectives and unanticipated results gained from this practicum.

References

- Canter, L. (1988, September). Homework without tears. Instructor, pp. 28-30.
- Cooper, H. (1989). Synthesis of research on homework. Educational Leadership, 47(3), 85-91.
- Easton, J. Q., & Bennett, A. (1989). Homework in different types of schools. (Report No. UD 026 801). San Francisco, CA: Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 308 256)
- Epstein, J. L., & Pinkow, L. (1988). A model for research on homework based on U.S. and international studies. (Report No. PS 017 622). Baltimore, MD: Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 301 323)
- Foyle, H. C., & Bailey, G. D. (1985). Homework in the classroom: Can it make a difference in student achievement? (Report No. SP 026 059). Chicago, IL: Annual Conference of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 257 796)
- Glasser, W. (1990). The quality school. New York: Harper & Row.
- Homer, S. (1978). Helpbook: Helping energetic learning parents in middle school/jr. high. (Report No. CS 004 690). Franklin, PA: Franklin Area School District. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 167 967)
- Lawson, A. E., & Wollman, W. T. (1975). Physics problems and the process of self-regulation. (Report No. SE 032 743). Berkeley, CA: Advancement of Education in Science-Oriented Programs. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 191 716)
- Rosemond, J. (1990). Ending the homework hassle: Understanding, preventing, and solving school performance problems. Kansas City, MO: Andrews and McMeel.
- Schlechty, P. (1990). Schools for the 21st century: Leadership imperatives for educational reform. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- Sonna, L. A. (1990). The homework solution. Charlotte, VT: Williamson Publishing Company.
- Turner, T. N. (1987, January). Coping with the ways students cope with homework. Phi Delta Kappan, pp. 32-35.
- Winter, C. (1969). Homework: Vehicle of communication. Annual Bulletin Order Association for Childhood Education International, 28-A, 29-33.
- Wolfe, D. (1989, October). In defense of "vague" assignments. Phi Delta Kappan, pp. 40-42.
- Worsham, M. E., & Evertson, C. M. (1980). Systems of student accountability for written work in junior high school English classes. (Report No. CS 205 999). Austin, TX: Research and Development Center for Teacher Education, The University of Texas at Austin. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 196 008)

APPENDIX A
EXPECTATIONS - REGULAR ENGLISH STUDENTS

Expectations - English 160

Texts:

Grammar and Composition, Grade 6, Prentice-Hall, 1990 (interchangeable with 1987)

Grammar and Composition Practice Book, Grade 6, Prentice-Hall, 1987 (136-98002-3)

Vocabulary for Achievement: Introductory Course
Houghton Mifflin, 1988 (2-26716)

Required Supplies:

Please refer to materials list for grade 6.

Purpose and Objective of Course:

The teaching of English encompasses instruction in grammar, usage, mechanics, vocabulary, spelling, study and research skills, speaking and listening skills, and composition. The student will be instructed in each of these areas and will constantly incorporate these skills into new areas of learning.

Expectations:

1. Students will be expected to maintain a planbook of daily assignments.
2. Students will be expected to come to class daily with appropriate materials.
3. Students will be expected to participate actively in class discussions, individual assignments, and cooperative learning groups.
4. Students are expected to submit work which represents their best efforts.
5. Students will complete all homework and in-class assignments when due.
6. Students are required to complete homework to the best of their ability. Homework assignments are to be completed on looseleaf paper or in a spiral notebook. No frayed-edge notebook paper is acceptable.

7. Homework will be reviewed the following day in class. For the most part, homework will constitute a review of instructed material; credit will be given or deducted according to its completion or noncompletion as the case warrants.
8. Students will be involved in the creative writing process. They will be required to submit paragraphs for comments and subsequent revision. They will learn to critique their own and other students' writing. They will participate in cooperative groups to encourage peers to write effectively and clearly.

Assignment Policy:

Assignments and projects are due by specified dates. In fairness to all students, the following policy will be enforced:

1. Students who are absent for a "significant" period of time, for reasons of illness or family emergency, between the date work is assigned and the date it is due will be given a "reasonable" extension.
2. If a student is absent on the day a homework assignment is due and the assignment was given before the student was absent, then the assignment will be due the day the student returns. This also applies to tests. If a student is absent for a test that was announced prior to the absence, the student will be expected to take the test the day he/she returns.
3. There are no retests. Students are expected to demonstrate knowledge on the day the test is assigned. While this material may be reviewed and included on a later test, the student may not retake a test to raise his/her grade.

Grading:

1. Quizzes will be given, some announced, some unannounced. This will give the instructor an understanding of the students' progress and will allow the teacher to adjust the curriculum accordingly. Quizzes will be graded.
2. Cumulative tests will be given at the end of each unit of study. These will be announced, and general concepts to be tested will be stated and reviewed.
3. Each nine-week grade will include the results of tests, quizzes, and special projects (70%), homework (20%), and class participation (10%).

General Comments:

Each student is an individual unto himself/herself and will be treated accordingly. Adherence to class rules is expected from all students in order to assure a safe and orderly learning environment. I look forward to working closely with you this academic year.

APPENDIX B
EXPECTATIONS - HONORS ENGLISH STUDENTS

Expectations - English 162

Texts:

Grammar and Composition, Grade 6, Prentice-Hall, 1990 (interchangeable with 1987)

Grammar and Composition Practice Book, Grade 6, Prentice-Hall, 1987 (136-98002-3)

Vocabulary for Achievement: First Course
Houghton Mifflin, 1988 (2-26717)

Required Supplies:

Please refer to materials list for grade 6.

Purpose and Objective of Course:

The teaching of English encompasses instruction in grammar, usage, mechanics, vocabulary, spelling, study and research skills, speaking and listening skills, and composition. The student will be instructed in each of these areas and will constantly incorporate these skills into new areas of learning.

Expectations:

1. Students will be expected to maintain a planbook of daily assignments.
2. Students will be expected to come to class daily with appropriate materials.
3. Students will be expected to participate actively in class discussions, individual assignments, and cooperative learning groups.
4. Students are expected to submit work which represents their best efforts.
5. Students will complete all homework and in-class assignments when due.
6. Students are required to complete homework to the best of their ability. Homework assignments are to be completed on looseleaf paper or in a spiral notebook. No frayed-edge notebook paper is acceptable.

7. Homework will be reviewed the following day in class. For the most part, homework will constitute a review of instructed material; credit will be given or deducted according to its completion or noncompletion as the case warrants.
8. Students will be involved in the creative writing process. They will be required to submit paragraphs for comments and subsequent revision. They will learn to critique their own and other students' writing. They will participate in cooperative groups to encourage peers to write effectively and clearly.

Assignment Policy:

Assignments and projects are due by specified dates. In fairness to all students, the following policy will be enforced:

1. Students who are absent for a "significant" period of time, for reasons of illness or family emergency, between the date work is assigned and the date it is due will be given a "reasonable" extension.
2. If a student is absent on the day a homework assignment is due and the assignment was given before the student was absent, then the assignment will be due the day the student returns. This also applies to tests. If a student is absent for a test that was announced prior to the absence, the student will be expected to take the test the day he/she returns.
3. There are no retests. Students are expected to demonstrate knowledge on the day the test is assigned. While this material may be reviewed and included on a later test, the student may not retake a test to raise his/her grade.

Grading:

1. Quizzes will be given, some announced, some unannounced. This will give the instructor an understanding of the students' progress and will allow the teacher to adjust the curriculum accordingly. Quizzes will be graded.
2. Cumulative tests will be given at the end of each unit of study. These will be announced, and general concepts to be tested will be stated and reviewed.
3. Each nine-week grade will include the results of tests, quizzes, and special projects (70%), homework (20%), and class participation (10%).

General Comments:

Each student is an individual unto himself/herself and will be treated accordingly. Adherence to class rules is expected from all students in order to assure a safe and orderly learning environment. I look forward to working closely with you this academic year.

APPENDIX C
WEEKLY ASSIGNMENT SHEET - REGULAR ENGLISH STUDENTS

Name _____ Assignments 11/12-11/15 Periods 1,2,3

Tests : Vocabulary - Unit 9 - Friday, 11/15; No spelling list
this week

Vocabulary - Draw or locate pictures of these words:

bolero, fiesta, poncho, siesta.

or

Due by Draw or locate pictures displaying the "ultimate
Friday, fiesta." Be creative!
11/15

or

Do Bonus sheet - Lesson 7 and 8. See me for this.

Writing - Do the "Writing Assignment" on page 58 in your
vocabulary book. Use the brochures I have to help you
prepare this assignment (6 sentences minimum).

or

Due by Interview Mrs. Hackshaw. Get her impressions of Spanish
Monday, culture, background information, and so forth. Use your
11/18 best judgment (6 sentences/questions minimum).

or

Prepare a Spanish Dish for us to "taste test." Bring me a
copy of the recipe.

or

???? Spanish theme

APPENDIX D

WEEKLY ASSIGNMENT SHEET - HONORS ENGLISH STUDENTS

Name _____

Assignments 11/18-11/22 Periods 5,6

Tests : Spelling - List 8 - Friday, 11/22; Vocabulary - Unit 10 -
Friday, 11/22

Spelling - List 8 - Follow directions.

Due Tuesday, 11/19

Vocabulary - Draw or locate pictures depicting 4 -phile or
4 -phobia words.

or

Due by Write sentences using 5 of your vocabulary words from
Friday, page 67.
11/22

or

???? No word searches or puzzles

Writing - Do "Writing Assignment" on page 72 in your vocabulary
book (6 sentences minimum).

or

Due by Explain how one of the -phobia words may cause problems
Monday, for people afflicted with the same
11/25 (6 sentences minimum).

or

???? Theme - The Suffixes -phile or -phobia

APPENDIX E
ORIGINAL HOMEWORK POLICY

Homework - The After-Hours Club

Grade six students will become members of an exclusive "After-Hours Club" designed to promote quality and creative homework assignments. The issue of after-hours assignments need not create a struggle among students, parents, and instructors. This year, as part of my personal continuing education program, I intend to approach homework from a different point of view.

Research indicates that homework develops a student's sense of responsibility, allows for personal ownership of a product, and encourages individual creativity. With this in mind, I have designed a homework plan to include, at times, a choice of alternate assignments. Students' input regarding suggested assignments will be solicited. Some assignments will involve family members and other students. The basic intent is to make all homework assignments function as enjoyable and meaningful learning experiences.

The following statements are taken from the list of expectations/goals/policies distributed earlier. Additions are included.

1. To develop organizational skills and responsibility, all students will maintain a planbook of daily assignments.
2. Students are expected to submit homework which reflects their best effort.
3. Students will complete all homework assignments when due.
4. Homework assignments are to be completed on looseleaf paper or in a spiral notebook. No frayed-edge notebook paper is acceptable.
5. Homework will be reviewed/presented the following day. For the most part, homework will constitute a review of instructed material. Credit will be given or deducted according to its completion or noncompletion as the case warrants. Homework accounts for 20% of the midterm and final grade.
6. In the event of absence, students will contact peers or the homework hotline to obtain assignments.

7. If a student is absent on the day a homework assignment is due and the assignment was given before the student was absent, the assignment will be due the day the student returns.
8. Students who are absent for a "significant" period of time for reasons of illness or family emergency will be given a "reasonable" extension.

Completing homework assignments need not be a nightly struggle or an opportunity for the student to search his/her creative excuse bank. I hope to provide meaningful assignments that will motivate students to complete the work in addition to accommodating their needs. Welcome to the After-Hours Club!

APPENDIX F
REVISED HOMEWORK GRADING POLICY

Revised Homework Grading Policy

Please be aware that the following homework grading policy is now in effect. Grades for the previous two weeks have been adjusted accordingly.

1. Student will receive 100 if the homework assignment is fully completed and submitted by the beginning of class on the date it is due.
2. Student will receive 75 if the homework assignment is fully completed and submitted by the end of the day it is due.
3. Student will receive 50 if the homework assignment is fully completed and submitted within two school days after the date it was due.
4. Student will receive 0 if the homework assignment is not submitted within two school days of the original due date.

The instructor will daily inform students of overdue assignments. It is the student's responsibility to complete assignments prior to the final acceptance date.